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Abstract

It seems reasonably clear that we don't evaluate much more than half as well as we know how, and it is improbable that pure logic will significantly move us toward greater effectiveness. Three ideas supporting this premise are: (1) the reward system or low premium on innovation and high premium on outside lecturing, consulting work and off campus activities, (2) the process of recruitment and socialization for professorial careers has been remarkable intense and narrow, and (3) the large number of students and the great diversity of them. These major dilemmas press those concerned with student personnel work in unfamiliar and uncomfortable directions. They demand that student personnel workers identify the appropriate people and form coalitions of students, faculty, and administrative officers who can exercise educational influence on our campuses and that they strongly support and help to make more telling and sophisticated those efforts to evaluate courses and instructors. Other needed directions are given. (Author/KJ)

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Needed: Fully Functioning Counseling Centers or Viable Communities?*

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Dr. Danskin's discussion[1] of fully functioning counseling centers implies a new vision of the role and significance of student personnel services in the contemporary university, and it rests on an informed and well placed fear that modern higher education is *in extremis*. As one who honors his vision and shares his judgment, I regret my inability to participate in the faith he professes or to join in his essentially optimistic forecasts of our educational future.

The reasons for my reluctant recalcitrance are basically two: On the one hand, the argument is unpersuasive that humanly constructive change in our institutions of higher learning is likely to result from more relevant educational research and a more sophisticated exploitation of opportunities for communication. On the other hand, the corporate responsiveness, flexibility, and orientation toward change in the contemporary college are, I believe, drastically overestimated in Dr. Danskin's reading of our condition. Let's examine more closely these highly related expressions of skepticism.

Like all things bright and beautiful, research and communication cannot be lightly derogated. Further, it is simply undeniable that we need more and better information about educational processes and the patterns of student development or that every campus in the country requires marked improvements in its systems of communication and in the quality and usefulness of the ideas and data that those systems distribute. In the current context, however, the contention that some interaction between research and communication accounts adequately for creative change calls to mind the farmer who was visited some years ago by his county agricultural agent, freshly minted by his state's land-grant college of agriculture. "Go 'way, sonny," the farmer said when told that the agent wanted to help him farm better through applying the communicated fruits of research; "I don't farm now half as good as I know how."

It seems reasonably clear that we don't educate, either, much more than half as well as we know how, and it is improbable that purely rational stimuli will significantly move us toward greater effectiveness. Of the long list of issues that, it seems to me, support this skeptical view and that urge rather different emphases from those that Dr. Danskin recommends, three merit mention here.

First, there is the whole question of the academic reward system. In American universities (and to only a slightly lesser degree in American colleges), ever since the German tradition entered into the dynamics of our educational life, professors have won prestige, security, and affluence---the general names for promotion, tenure, and salary increments---primarily by investing their talents and their imaginations in scholarship and the advancement of their increasingly professionalized

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disciplines. As Talcott Parsons and Gerald Platt have recently pointed out,[2] the professoriate is organized in an associational fashion through national and international dimensions rather than in an institutional manner, and the institutions typically have, in one way or another, given the administration of these powerful reinforcements of status, tenure, and money into the hands of the academic guilds that command the basic variance in professorial loyalties. It is no surprise, then, that universities not infrequently, when a man is up for promotion or a raise, make systematic inquiries of his disciplinary peers off the campus and are largely determined in their decision by the responses they obtain. Such a procedure is clear testimony to the deferring by institutions to the professional and learned societies in the definition and operation of the scheme of rewards that significantly controls the behavior of academic men. Although there are some to whom the proposition will come as news, professors are all too human; and like other humans, their activities and personal commitments are meaningfully shaped by the rules according to which Brownie points are provided. If instruction, the development of more personalized relationships with students, and active attention to a variety of student needs are not reasonably high in the hierarchy of reinforced behaviors, then they are not likely to become dominant in the occupational life styles of many faculty members. And neither improved research nor better communication will probably exert much influence on men whose bread is so clearly buttered on a different side.

It is important to be clear. We are not talking about a group of villainous academicians who are deliberately and maliciously neglectful of their classrooms and the youth to whom they are responsible as teachers. Neither are we discussing some conspiracy of learned and professional organizations to dupe our universities and to subvert the processes of education at the college level. We are, I think, attempting to understand a systemic situation which, whatever its original instigations and its present virtues, now has two related but rather different dangerously disruptive effects: It puts a very low premium on creative and innovative thought about teaching and about the shifting meanings of education among university faculty members, and it puts a very high premium on those professorial enterprises---scholarship, professional involvements, outside lecturing, consulting work---that divide faculty members from their students, particularly their undergraduates. Because this systemic condition finds its focus and its potency in a highly effective patterning of rewards, it is likely to be changed, I believe, only by significant modifications in the structure of reinforcements, not by either the facts produced by research or the exhortations of more sophisticated communication.

But if the reward system is crucially important here, there is a second point that can be overlooked only at one's peril. The process of recruitment and socialization for professorial careers have been remarkably intense and narrow ones. Virtually every faculty member in our country's roughly 2,400 institutions of higher education is in some significant sense graduate-school made. In general, despite some exceptions, and allowing for the dubiousness of most sweeping generalizations, graduate schools select students and train them for only one kind of career, a career in specialized and professionalized schol-

arship. Rarely do they worry in more than perfunctory ways about the college-level teaching that will absorb a major share of the time of those who hold advanced degrees. When they attend at all to this topic, they concentrate mainly on how teaching can reveal the inner logic of a discipline and win high-achieving undergraduates to doctoral study and, ultimately, to the perpetuating of a particular discipline's existence. It is not often that one finds a graduate program that is concerned with such questions as how the acts called teaching are facilitative of the far more crucial acts called learning, how a special body of subject matter bears on the dynamics of individual student development, or how a distinctive corpus of ideas and information can define a helpful window on the rapidly changing, frequently frightening, and disconcertingly uncertain world that is the doubtful inheritance of contemporary youth. As scholarship has become increasingly specialized and professionalized, its public relevance---its relevance to intimate issues of personal development and to some functional understanding of dynamically technologized and managerial society---has become badly blurred. A part of that blurring process must be attributed, I think, to the intensive single-mindedness with which our graduate schools have shaped their policies of recruitment and training. One major consequence has been an ironic divorce between the enterprise of scholarship and the adventure of education, between the processes of research and educational significance of the intellect and the intellectual, between the role of the faculty member as investigator and that same faculty member's role as teacher. If this reading of things is at all accurate, then our urgent need is for graduate-school reform and the wholesale opening up of new career lives for academically interested people. Until this kind of change is set in motion, I doubt that more educational research and more broadside communication will have much impact on our institutional practices. The bulk of the people now composing the professoriate have been wrongly selected and wrongly socialized to be sufficiently responsive.

Finally, the crucial meaning of our current reward system and our narrowly if intensively recruited and socialized faculties takes on a palpable urgency when we consider the changing composition of our student bodies. Not only are we dealing in the United States with unprecedented numbers of college students---well over seven million of them---but as we have increased access to higher educational opportunity, we have accepted the task of serving an unprecedented diversity of them. There are youngsters now in significant concentrations on our campuses from backgrounds and subcultural enclaves of American life that have never before been meaningfully represented in our institutions. Black students are a dramatic and singularly important case in point.

If the de jure opportunity of sheer access is to be translated into a de facto opportunity for genuine growth and self-development, then it seems to me that the radical diversity in our student bodies must be matched with a comparable diversity in our educational programs, in our instructional staffs, and perhaps even in our academic standards. There is ample room to doubt the comprehensive validity of a monolithic conception of the educated man; there is similar room to doubt the proposition that what is educative for one student is ipso facto equally educative for all others. One can even go so far, I think, to say that the increasing of access (as reflected, for example, in the downright

eagerness of most institutions to increase their Negro enrollments) without making appropriate accommodations in the range and character of learning experiences, in the talents and interests of faculty, and in the criteria of educational progress amounts to little more than the making of promises, that cannot be fulfilled. Like the farmer of our fable, we know enough now to consider this ugly possibility seriously and to respond to it humanely. The problem lies less in what we know than in what, because of our reinforcement histories, we cherish most intimately, just as it lies in the long established interaction between our academic reward system on the one side and, on the other, the character of our policies and practices in the recruitment and training of our professors.

Here lie, it seems to me, our major dilemmas. For those concerned with student personnel work, they press us in directions that are unfamiliar and uncomfortable. In my view, they demand that we identify the appropriate people and form the coalitions of students, faculty, and administrative officers that can exercise educational influence on our campuses; that we strongly support and help to make more telling and sophisticated those efforts to evaluate courses and instructors; that we organize planning groups of students, professors, and administrators to work out ways by which students can formulate educational goals, devise experiential routes (many of them quite unconventional) by which they can be achieved, and enlist the support necessary to make such ventures work; that we take responsibility for offering, for full educational credit, courses designed to enlarge self-knowledge that pay due regard to the intellect as a dimension of personhood and that are genuinely developmental, not merely the vehicle of allegedly peak experiences with no longer term consequences for character; that we find and work with those faculty members who are concerned with instructional innovation, with students as people, and with the university as a social instrument for enlarging one's comprehension of the larger society and its harrowing human problems. The list could be readily extended and made more specific, especially in relation to the potential contributions of student personnel work to graduate education. But I have overstayed my welcome and can only, at this point, beg for consideration of some of the issues I have tried to raise and to voice my confidence that in questioning Dr. Danskin's formulations, I have only supported the forward-looking and insightful practices he has put into operation at Kansas State and at other institutions that have been fortunate enough to feel his influence.

Footnotes

*Read at the annual meeting of the American College Personnel Association in Las Vegas, Nevada, April 1, 1969.

[1]Danskin, D. The university and a fully functioning counseling center: A theoretical viewpoint. Paper read at the annual meeting of the American College Personnel Association in Las Vegas, Nevada, April 1, 1969.

[2]Parsons, T., and Platt, G. A Study of the Academic Profession. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Department of Social Relations, Harvard University, 1968.